Skills for Success:
PROCRASTINATION

Objectives:

1. Connect with peers
2. Learn about CC services
3. Identify some underlying causes of procrastination
4. Discover different types of procrastination, and which types you tend to engage in
5. Learn general strategies and techniques that can decrease how much you procrastinate
6. Understand how to create a to-do list that feels more doable

Take home messages...

1. 
2. 
3. 
Plans to Stop Procrastinating

Act After You Plan
- Start with a written plan of action to avoid getting distracted
- Keep your plan simple and straightforward
- Start with the one thing you must get done today to feel productive
- Should be a manageable item you can complete in 10-15 minutes
- Break the day up into a number of “action sessions” for other tasks
- Balance the time spent planning with time spent creating or doing
- Avoid over-planning because this is another method of procrastination
- Before ending your day spend 10 minutes reviewing your progress
- Take time to plan your actions for the next day

Be Action Directed
- Your tasks should match your values or purpose
- If not, you will find it difficult to muster the energy to tackle your tasks
- Bring each task into congruence with your basic mission
- If you can’t, take it off of your list

Bite Sized Pieces
- Don’t put any “To-do” on your list that takes more than 30 minutes
- If it takes longer, it’s actually a series of smaller “to-do’s”.
- Break each step out and list it separately
- You don’t have to tackle all the steps of a project in one sitting
- Spread a large task out over several work sessions
- You will see greater progress as you check more items off your list
- You will avoid getting bogged down in one large task or project

Decide to Schedule It
- Determine how much you can do or tolerate at a time, which may take some experimentation
- Don’t push yourself too far or you’ll get bored or frustrated
- Plan these project “pieces” into your daily activities
- Set a “completion point” for accomplishing each small task
- Completion points give you an end in sight to look forward to

Good Enough is Good Enough
- Perfectionism often causes procrastination
- Perfectionists would rather put it off than do an incomplete job
- Rather than perfection, aim for progress
- Any small step toward completion is an accomplishment

Just Do It
- Do the hardest job (or part of the job) first and get it out of the way
- Once you tackle the part you are dreading, the rest is a breeze
- Stop spending time over-planning and just jump into doing it
- Set a time limit – “I’ll file papers for 5 minutes,” and stick to it
- Alternate unpleasant jobs with tasks you enjoy
- Delegate out items you can’t make yourself do

Plan Around Interruptions
- Interruptions tend to occur in identifiable patterns
- Notice when interruptions occur, by whom, and why
- Take steps to prevent those interruptions before they occur
- If they can’t be prevented, learn how to delegate to someone else
- If they can’t be delegated, learn how to delay until you are finished

Make It Fun
- Make the project and environment as pleasant as possible
- Play music, open a window, have a cold drink, etc.
- Give yourself the best tools and work space for the project
- Take a few minutes to organize your work space because it will make your brain feel more organized too
- A clean desk allows you to focus without visual distraction
- It’s only a chore if you think of it as a chore

Staying Motivated
- Find an “accountability partner” to track your progress
- Schedule a regular time to check in with a friend or colleague
- Rewarding your accomplishments encourages productivity
- Give yourself a break, a treat, a nap – whatever is a reward for you
- Reward every step along the way, not just the end result
- The bigger the accomplishment, the bigger the reward
Overcoming Procrastination
Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task or work that needs to be accomplished. This can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, depression and self-doubt among students. Procrastination has a high potential for painful consequences. It interferes with the academic and personal success of students.

For most of us, the word “procrastination” reminds us of experiences where we have felt guilty, lazy, inadequate, and anxious— or some combination of these. It also implies a value judgment; if you procrastinate, you are bad, and as such, you lack worth as a person.

Procrastination and Its Causes
In order to understand and solve your procrastination problems, it helps to analyze carefully the situations where your work is not being completed. First, determine whether the cause is poor time management; if so, you will need to learn and develop time management skills. If you know how to manage your time but don’t make use of those skills, other reasons may be causing the problem. Many individuals cite the following reasons for avoiding work:

- **LACK OF RELEVANCE** - If something is neither relevant nor meaningful to you personally, it may be difficult to get motivated to begin.
- **ACCEPTANCE OF ANOTHER’S GOALS** - If a project has been imposed or assigned to you and it is not consistent with your own interests, you may be reluctant to spend the necessary time to see it to conclusion.
- **PERFECTIONISM** - Having unreachable standards will discourage you from pursuing a task. Remember, perfection is unattainable.
- **EVALUATION ANXIETY** - Since others’ responses to your work are not under your direct control, overvaluing these responses can create the kind of anxiety that will interfere with work getting accomplished.
- **AMBIVUTY** - If you are uncertain of what is expected of you, it may be difficult to get started.
- **FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN** - If you are venturing into a new realm or field, you don’t have any way of knowing how well you’ll do. Such an uncertain outcome may inhibit your desire to begin.

- **INABILITY TO HANDLE THE TASK** - If through lack of training, skill, or ability you feel that you lack the personal resources or knowledge to do the assignment, you may avoid it completely.
- **PERSONAL PROBLEMS** - For example, financial difficulties, problems with your boyfriend/girlfriend, etc. interfere with your ability to focus.

Procrastination Takes Many Forms
Once you have surmounted the emotional block by acknowledging your procrastination and the feelings it causes, and after you understand the underlying causes, you need to look at how you procrastinate. Consider the following examples:

1. You act as though if you ignore a task, it will go away. The mid-term exam in your chemistry class is not likely to vaporize, no matter how much you ignore it.
2. You underestimate the work involved in the task, or overestimate your abilities and resources in relationship to the task. You tell yourself that you grasp concepts so easily that you need only spend one hour on the physics problems, which would normally take you six.
3. You deceive yourself into believing that a mediocre performance or lesser standards are acceptable. For example, if you deceive yourself that a 2.3 GPA will still get you into the medical school of your choice, you may be avoiding the decision to work harder to improve your grade point average and may have to alter your career plans. This form of avoidance can prevent you from consciously making choices about important goals in your life.
4. You deceive yourself by substituting one worthy activity for another, like cleaning the apartment instead of writing your term paper. Valuing a clean apartment is fine but it only becomes important when there is a paper due, you are procrastinating.
5. You believe that repeated “minor” delays are harmless. An example is putting off writing your paper so you can watch 5 minutes of your favorite television program. If you don’t return to writing after 5 minutes, you may stay tuned to the television for the entire evening, and do no work.
6. You dramatize a commitment to a task rather than actually doing it. For example, you take books on vacation but never open them, or decline invitations for pleasurable events, but do not do the work or get needed relaxation. Thus, you stay in a constant state of unproductive readiness to work—without ever working.

7. You persevere on only one portion of the task, like writing and rewriting the introductory paragraph of the paper but not dealing with the body and the conclusion. The introductory paragraph is important, but not at the expense of the entire project.

8. You become paralyzed in deciding between alternative choices, such as spending so much time deciding between two term paper topics that you don't have sufficient time to write the paper.

**What to Do about Procrastination**

If you can visualize yourself in one or more of these situations, you may be ready to overcome your problems with avoidance or procrastination. The following is a list of additional steps that may help you to deal with avoidance:

- Extract from the above examples the principles that apply to you.
- Make honest decisions about your work. If you wish to spend only a minimal amount of effort or time on a particular task, admit it—do not allow guilt feelings to interfere with your realization of this fact. Weigh the consequences of various amounts of investment in a project. This step exposes intentional reasons for avoiding work. If you have been unintentionally avoiding work, admit to yourself that you do want to achieve certain goals and accept the responsibilities involved in meeting those goals.
- Work to acquire an adequate understanding of what is necessary to accomplish a task within a given time frame.
- Distinguish between activities which dramatize your sense of commitment and those which will help you accomplish the task. Devote an appropriate amount of time for each part of a task. Develop an overview of the entire project and visualize the steps that are needed to reach completion.

- People rarely are inspired to work diligently for a cause that has little meaning for them. Examine your choices and motives, particularly if you feel that you “have to” do something.
- It is common for students to try to please others, particularly family. Explore if the task is relevant to you personally or to your future goals. Explore how you might include or pursue goals that are more meaningful to you. Some counseling may help you develop a strategy to spend more of your time and effort on goals that you fully endorse.
- Often we are concerned with how others will respond to our performance. Try to evaluate the total impact this one reaction/grade will have on your life. Remember NO ONE performs highly all the time, or in every area. Focus on completing a task to lessen your workload and anxiety, regardless of the evaluation.
- If you are dealing with personal problems that are interfering with completing your work, seek help. You can reach out to loved ones and trusted professors, and/or make an appointment to talk with someone at University Counseling Services.

**Effective Planning**

The larger the project, the more difficult it is to plan effectively to carry it out. The following steps may be helpful:

- Divide the task into small steps. The entire job may seem impossible, but smaller segments may seem more manageable. Post deadlines on a calendar, alloting sufficient time for each step. Do not fool yourself by believing you can do more than is humanly possible.
- It is important to assess your obligations to check if it is possible to complete them. College students have numerous responsibilities including class attendance, homework, a job, membership in clubs or organizations, and a social life. Many students inadvertently assume too many responsibilities and literally do not have enough minutes in the day. If this is the case, remember you are not the first to over-commit yourself. However, you may need to omit or reschedule some of these obligations.
- Monitor your progress on the small steps. Watch for the pitfalls discussed earlier. Assess problems when they arise and do something about them quickly. Keep track of the segments and how they fit together to form the whole picture. Reassess time commitments as necessary.
- Be reasonable in your expectations of yourself. Perfectionist or extremely strict expectations may cause you to rebel or may sabotage your progress. Don’t avoid getting started due to worry about how good your results must be. A reasonable amount of interest and effort almost always ends up in a satisfactory outcome. Remember it often feels worse to not do a task at all instead of doing it in a less than perfect manner. Taking the first active step to begin the project will increase your motivation and confidence in your ability to complete the job competently.
- If you feel unprepared or incapable of completing new tasks or that the expectations are ambiguous, you may want to seek guidance, support, or a new perspective from someone familiar with the task, such as the professor or other students. Remind yourself you tend to get nervous when trying a new skill but you have learned new tasks and information in the past.
- Avoid distractions. College students often have numerous distractions in their rooms including televisions, video games, a computer and more. Arrange your work space exactly the way you like it and work at times when you are most energetic. Set up the environment with as few distractions as possible (i.e. only watch television in the living room).

**Need Additional Help?**
Should you feel you would like more suggestions for coping with procrastination, the Counseling Center offers free workshops and individual counseling. You may call the Counseling Center at 410-455-2472 for more information.

Adapted from: [http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/Brochures/procras.htm](http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/Brochures/procras.htm) and [http://www.utdallas.edu/counseling/selfhelp/procrastination.html](http://www.utdallas.edu/counseling/selfhelp/procrastination.html)
Nine Time-Making Tips

1. Learn to say “NO”. Remember your priorities. If a task or an opportunity presents itself that will help you achieve a high-priority task, then take it. But all other tasks/opportunities will detract from the resources (time, energy, effort, etc.) available for you to accomplish your goals. Cut down on lower priority commitments (favors, activities, etc.) until you have more resources at your disposal.

2. Choose high-priority tasks first, no matter how tempting it might be to address a more enjoyable or easier low-priority task. This is not to say that you can’t take a break from a high-priority task (e.g. studying) to do a low-priority task (e.g. cleaning), but there should be limits on the time spent “off-task”.

3. Build time into your schedule for interruptions/breaks/unforeseen problems. These are a part of life, and if you don’t anticipate some “slippage”, you might be tempted to give up on your schedule (“Well, today's shot already, no sense in even trying to keep the plan...”)

4. Use stress management techniques on a daily basis. Like time management, stress management involves a lifestyle change, and each makes the other easier.

5. Utilize your brain’s “downtime”. There are times when you'll be bored/daydreaming, etc. First task is to become aware that this is happening (at first these times may be hard to identify, but with practice, you can catch yourself when you’re wandering), next task is to use this time productively. Sometimes it means re-focusing on task at hand. Other times it means abandoning that task for now (coming back to it to the first opportunity if it’s a high-priority task) and using that time to make a list, make plans, break down a task, etc.

6. Set limits on TV, pleasure reading, playing, socializing, etc. It is important not to deprive yourself of life’s pleasures, but be sure to set a time limit AND STICK TO IT!

7. Be aware of your top distracters and when you’re working on a high-priority task, limit your access to these temptations. Catch the impulse and defer it until break time.

8. Stop expecting perfection. One of the main causes for procrastination is not wanting to get started on something until you can do it either: 1) All at once; or 2) Exactly the way you want to. When you’re trying to do a high-priority task, the important thing is to “just do it!” The main thing is to get started, get the momentum working for you, instead of against you and build on what you’ve started.

9. Finally, it’s important to also review your schedule at the end of the week. Look back on how much you did get done (e.g. “Went to the library and found resources for the big project, spent 3 good hours studying on Tuesday,” etc.) and reward yourself. Also look back on what you could have done better (“Didn’t keep to my schedule on Monday, spent too much time talking with friends on Friday morning,” etc.) and think of how to improve on them. Review your To-Do list daily, adding, deleting or re-prioritizing as needed.
Guidelines for Setting up a Useful To-Do List

Try structuring your To-Do list in terms of priorities. What is most important for you to do today? What's next in propriety? Break your list down into 3 categories: A's, B's and C's, with A's taking priority over B's, which in turn take priority over C's. Minimize distracters and/or negative self-talk, as much as possible. Try to make sure that the individual items listed are

SMART:

Specific – The more specific, the better.

Measurable – So you can gauge your progress and know clearly when you are done.

Attainable – Make your items as realistic and accomplishable as possible.

Relevant – be sure that the items on your list help you accomplish your long-term goals.

Timely – It is better to set goals ahead of schedule, rather than waiting for the last minute to try to accomplish too much.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not SMART list</th>
<th>SMART list</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make a list (A)</td>
<td>Make a prioritized To-Do list for today (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study (A)</td>
<td>Read Chapters 1-3 in Chem, (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review noted from first three history lectures (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get started on next week's</td>
<td>Find topic for English paper (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English paper (B)</td>
<td>Make an outline (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go to library for sources (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean apartment ©</td>
<td>Search the internet for sources (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do dishes (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pick up clothes (C)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, it is better to err by being too specific rather than too vague. This gives you a better idea of how much time you need to allot to a given activity, provides more motivation to get started and is easier to visualize the specific steps involved.

Break items into smaller tasks or mini goals. It is important to keep all the subtasks at the same level of priority as the larger task it came from.

It is important to review your To-Do list on a daily basis, since items will likely change priorities as deadlines get closer and as tasks get accomplished. For example, as the English paper deadline gets nearer and as the A-Level tasks above it get accomplished, the items related to getting started on the English paper should rise to A-level priority.
SMART To-Do List

A. Top Priority
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.

B. Middle Priority
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.

C. Lower Priority
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.
Procrastination Style Quiz

Circle yes to all that apply to you:

1. **Yes** Do you have difficulty completing a project because your high standards have not been met?
2. **Yes** Do you get preoccupied with details, rules or schedules that others don’t seem to care much about?
3. **Yes** Do you put off doing an assignment until you can find the best time to do it, or the best time presents itself?
4. **Yes** Do you feel upset or humiliated if you don’t get as good a grade as one of your peers?
5. **Yes** Do you think a lot about things you want to accomplish, but rarely get them off the ground?
6. **Yes** Do you wait for opportunities to drop into your lap rather than take an active “go get em” approach?
7. **Yes** Do you plan study time with friends that turn into bull sessions about “important things,” like video game strategies or gossip?
8. **Yes** Do you take a break from studying to watch one TV program, but end up watching three more?
9. **Yes** Do youparalyze yourself before starting a project, worrying so much about the “what ifs” that you are too anxious to do the task?
10. **Yes** Do you hesitate to leave your comfort zone, avoiding situations that might cause stress or anxiety?
11. **Yes** Do you have trouble working on a project because you doubt your judgment or ability?
12. **Yes** Do you often spend more time worrying about an assignment than doing it?
13. **Yes** Do you become sulky, irritable, or argumentative when asked to do a task that you don’t want to do?
14. **Yes** Do you take offense at suggestions from others regarding how you could be more productive?
15. **Yes** Do you often believe you’re doing a better job or should get a better grade than your teachers think?
16. **Yes** Do you avoid doing assignments that are boring, even if you know that your avoidance will have important consequences?
17. **Yes** Do you ignore deadlines, then at the last minute work frantically to get things done?
18. **Yes** Do you enjoy, or take pride in taking risks or living on the edge?
19. **Yes** Do you habitually wait until the last minute before you start studying for an exam?
20. **Yes** Do you have difficulty saying “no” to others’ requests, then feel resentful when it’s time to do them?
21. **Yes** Do you run around doing things, without really feeling that you’re accomplishing very much?
22. **Yes** Do you often find yourself complaining “I have so much to do,” I have no time,” or “I’m too busy” to do what you need to do?

If you answered “yup, that’s frequently me” to any of these questions, you probably know you’ve got a procrastination problem. To discover your procrastination style, read on!

If you answered yes to:

Questions 1-4: you’re a **Perfectionist Procrastinator**
Questions 5-8: you’re a **Dreamer Procrastinator**
Questions 9-12: you’re a **Worrier Procrastinator**
Questions 13-16: you’re a **Defter Procrastinator**
Questions 17-19: you’re a **Crisis-Maker Procrastinator**
Questions 20-22: you’re an **Over-Doer Procrastinator**

Adapted from drapadin.com
SIX MAJOR PROCRASTINATION STYLES

The Perfectionist

"I'd like to do this job, BUT I want it to be prefect!"

Perfectionists can be reluctant to start – or finish – a task because they don’t want to do anything less than a perfect job. Although their primary concern is to not fall short of their own lofty standards, they also worry about failing the high expectations that they believe other people have of them. Unfortunately, once they have begun a task; they often can’t resist spending far more time and energy on it than is required.

The Dreamer

"I'd like to start doing it, BUT I hate all those bothersome details!"

The dreamer wants life to be easy and pleasant. Difficult challenges that confront the dreamer can automatically provoke resistance: “That might be hard to do” quickly become “I can’t do it.” Dreamers are very skillful in developing grandiose ideas, but they seem incapable of turning their sketchy ideas into realities: a pattern that frustrates themselves as well as the people around them.

The Worrier

"I could do it, BUT I’m afraid of..."

Worrier procrastinators have an excessive need for security, which causes them to fear risk. They proceed too timidly through life, worrying incessantly about the “what ifs.” Faced with a new situation or demand, they become especially anxious, because anything new involves change and, therefore, unknown and potentially undesirable consequences. Once they start working on a project, they are likely to drag it out in an effort to “soften the blow.”

The Defier

"I could do it, BUT why should I have to do it?"

The defier is a rebel, seeking to buck the rules. Some defiers are openly proud of their tendency to procrastinate, precisely because it goes against the “normal” or “logical” way to do things. By procrastinating, they are setting their own schedule – one that nobody else can predict or control. Often defiers are more subtle – they don’t flaunt their opposition, they simply don’t take on the responsibility to do it in a timely manner (i.e., “passive-aggressive”).

The Crisis-Maker

"I'd do it now, BUT I only get motivated at the last minute!"

The crisis-maker needs to live on the edge. Addicted to the adrenaline rush of intense emotion, constant challenge, and emergency action, crisis-makers delight in pulling things off at the last minute. To them, procrastination is a form of adventure. Adventure, however, are by nature risky, and the crisis-maker is often a loser.

The Overdoer

"I'd do it now, BUT I have so much to do!"

Overdoer procrastinators say “yes” too much because they are unable – or unwilling – to make choices and establish priorities. In other words, they really haven’t mastered the art of decision-making. Because of this liability, they tend to be inefficient in managing time, organizing resources, and resolving conflicts. The result is that they try to do too much at once and, inevitable, fail.
Tips for Each Procrastination Type

The Perfectionist Procrastinator:
1. Strive for accomplishment, not perfection.
2. Focus on what’s achievable, not what’s ideal.
3. Avoid all-or-nothing, black-and-white thinking.
4. Avoid using extreme words, like “perfect” or “failure.”
5. Express yourself more in terms of choices, not obligations.
   (Try to eliminate the word “should” from your vocabulary.)
6. Give yourself a time limit for completing a task.
7. Make your to-do list short and practical.
8. Delegate or get others involved, and let them do things their way.
9. Reward yourself for your achievements.

The Dreamer Procrastinator:
1. Avoid thinking that you don’t have to do things that other people need to do, because you’re “special.”
2. Be mindful of the difference between “feeling good” and “feeling good about yourself.”
3. Appreciate the difference between dreams and goals. Dreams are fantasies, and you must work to achieve goals.
4. Develop the habit of thinking in more detail: not just “I want to be successful,” but “what do I need to do to be successful.”
5. Change your “I wish” to “I’ll try to” and “I will.” Change your “someday” and “soon” to a specific time.
6. Use an alarm or timer to remind you to do a task.
7. Each day, assign yourself at least one special “get ahead” task in addition to several “catch-up” or maintenance tasks.
8. Do fewer passive activities and more active ones.
9. Plan each major project in writing, using a timeline with specific dates.

The Worrier Procrastinator:
1. Avoid mentally catastrophizes tasks and events.
2. Recognize that making no decision is really making a decision.
3. Work on committing yourself to a goal, and determine what steps you need to take to achieve the goal.
4. When faced with a challenging task, be sure to give as much consideration to what’s exciting about it as you do to what’s making you afraid.
5. Instead of panicking with a “what if?” question, state the answer to that question.
6. Reduce the number of qualifiers, like “kind of,” “maybe,” and “perhaps” in your speech.
7. Reduce your worrying by changing your “I don’t know” to “one thing I do know is...”
8. Read motivational books and develop a personal repertoire of motivational phrases.
9. Break down every large, intimidating project into smaller, easier to do tasks.
10. Spend more time with optimistic people who inspire self-confidence, and less times with pessimistic people who foster worry and self-doubt.

The Defier Procrastinator:
1. Learn to view what someone else wants or expects as a request, not a demand.
2. Think about negotiating with people, not just defying them.
3. Pick your battles carefully, weighing what’s really worth fighting for according to a scale of priorities.
4. Mean what you say and say what you mean.
5. If you haven’t done something, own up to it rather than taking a passive-aggressive approach.
6. Minimize expressions of indignation or self-righteousness.
7. Be aware of your tone of voice. See if you can sound more positive rather than hostile, challenging, or condescending.
8. Take pains to “decide and do” rather than “complain and defy.”
9. Do what you know needs to be done. Don’t wait until somebody tells you to do it and then act out of defiance.
10. Work with your team (family, peers, co-workers, etc.) not against your team.
The Crisis-Maker Procrastinator:
1. Understand that you may not be interested in doing a task until after you get involved in doing it.
2. While thinking about a task, focus at least as much on facts as you do on feelings. (What needs to be done vs. whether you feel like doing it.)
3. Avoid overdramatic, polarized language (all-or-nothing).
4. When discussing a task or responsibility, focus on the positive aspects of it, not just the negative.
5. Keep a journal of repetitive crises in your life so that you understand your patterns.
6. Figure out another way to handle a situation so that you can avoid recurring crises.
7. Create your own motivators to change a boring task into an interesting one, so that you will be more motivated to do it.
8. To counteract your need to stimulate yourself by creating artificial emergencies, engage in other activities, such as sports, that can get your adrenaline going.

The Over-Doer Procrastinator:
1. Say “goodbye” to the Superman/Superwoman myth. You can’t do it all.
2. Focus your thoughts on how to gain control over things, instead of how things are controlling you.
3. Look at life as an adventure, not a constant struggle.
4. Learn to say “no” to others when you think it’s appropriate.
5. Talk more about your options, less about your obligations.
6. Speak less defensively and more positively about the times when you’re relaxing or just hanging out.
7. Avoid characterizing yourself in self-talk or in conversations as powerless or without choices.
8. See what tasks you can eliminate (not do at all), consolidate (do in conjunction with other things), or delegate (get help).
9. Take relaxation breaks as needed and enjoy unexpected free time.
10. Create contingency plans and back-up systems before you need them, so that they are readily available if and when you do.